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REPRINT DEPARTMENT

In this section of the magazine will be reproduced a few of the rarest out-of-print books bearing on the history of the Northwest. The one selected as the first to be reprinted here is "The History of Oregon, Geographical and Political," by George Wilkes, published by William H. Colyer, New York, 1845. It is one of the rarest and least known books of that period just before the treaty with Great Britain in 1846, during which many books and pamphlets were published. The book includes a proposition for a national railroad and a series of letters from an Oregon immigrant of 1843.

THE HISTORY OF OREGON, GEOGRAPHICAL AND POLITICAL.

By George Wilkes.

[Continued from the last issue of the Washington Historical Quarterly.]

Historical Account of the Discovery and Settlement of Oregon Territory, Comprising an Examination of the Old Spanish Claims, the British Pretensions, and a Deduction of the United States Title.

The stream was found as Gray had described it to be, seven miles wide at its mouth, and decreasing to the extraordinary narrowness of a thousand yards, at a distance of twenty-five miles from the sea. This remarkable circumstance suggested an idea to Broughton and Vancouver when they laid their heads together afterward at San Francisco, which, if it do not give them credit for an extraordinary stretch of ingenuity, at least bestows upon them the most unquestionable title for meanness and dishonesty that could possibly be contrived. These gentlemen asserted that the river commenced at the distance of twenty-five miles from the sea; that Gray had not reached this point, but the part surveyed and explored by him was only an inlet or sound; consequently, the discovery of the river itself belonged of right, to Lieutenant Broughton! Unfortunately, however, for these maritime lexicographers, the geographical definitions of these terms will not consent to turn themselves wrongside out, either for their purposes, or for the service of her most Christian Majesty, and "sounds" and "inlets" of the sea, despite the ungracious straining of Captains Vancouver

and Broughton, will still, as before, stand for independent arms, or friths, whose waters flowing up into the land are necessarily salt. The waters of the Columbia, on the contrary, are fresh in their whole volume to within ten miles of the ocean, at which point, by the way, Captain Gray filled the casks of his ship. The conduct of the British government in adopting such an absurd pretense as this, is sufficiently discreditable; but when contrasted with the assumption in favor of Meares, it receives an additional tinct of dishonor, and betrays a desperation of motive approaching to insanity. In a **Statement*** presented by the British plenipotentiaries in 1826, to the American minister, embracing a number of propositions of about equal weight, it is alleged that **Meares (!)** is really entitled to the merit of the discovery of the Columbia, because "he actually entered its bay in 1788, to the northern headland of which he gave the name of Cape Disappointment, a name which it bears to this day." This reasoning on both sides of the question may be considered as the climax of argument, and the world may now rationally hope to see the long standing proposition, that black is white and white is black, satisfactorily established by the transcendent genius of British diplomacy. What signifies it if the doctrine in favor of Meares lets in the superior claim of Heceta, or if the rule of Vancouver wages destruction against Meares, the proposition is fortified at both ends, and those who like may fire away at either. Glorious, wise, powerful, magnanimous England! happy art thou in the possession of diplomatists, whose sagacity has discovered that a false position backed with power, is better than a true one supported only by the illusory strength of right, and who have the moral boldness to adopt a principle, maugre the whinings of all the theoretical ideologists who dream of honor, and who waste their lives in speculative rules of ethics!

From the time of the breaking out of the war between Spain and Great Britain in 1795, up to the year 1816, the monarchies of Europe were too much engaged in wrestling with the energies of revolutionary France, and in resisting the stupendous power of the Empire, to pay any attention to a region so distant and insignificant as the Northwest Coast of the Pacific; but the citizens of the United States, whose happy geographical position preserved them from being embroiled in the inhuman strife, availed themselves of the peculiar facilities thus offered to them, and carried on the trade exclusively between the Northwest coasts and the China Seas.

[Continued.]

*See Appendix No. 6.